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Justice Department official Bruce Ohr (right) has become the Trump allies' latest focus in their efforts to raise questions about the investigators who ran the probe into the Trump campaign's contacts with Russia. | Pablo Martinez Monisvais/AP Photo

GOP lawmakers grill DOJ official Ohr over Trump dossier

By **KYLE CHENEY** | 08/28/2018 11:18 AM EDT | Updated 08/28/2018 12:57 PM EDT

Bruce Ohr, the Justice Department official whose longtime relationship with former British spy Christopher Steele has drawn intense scrutiny from Capitol Hill Republicans, is facing questions Tuesday about the timing of his contacts with Fusion GPS, the firm that worked with Steele to create and disseminate his so-called dossier about President Donald Trump's relationship with Russia.

Ohr, who appeared for a closed-door interview in a Capitol office building, has become the Trump allies' latest focus in their efforts to raise questions about the investigators who ran the probe into the Trump campaign's contacts with Russia. As a senior Justice Department staffer, Ohr passed along Steele's information to the FBI, even after the bureau terminated its formal relationship with Steele over media leaks.

Republicans have raised questions about Ohr's contacts with Steele and Ohr's wife Nellie, who worked for Fusion. Lawmakers and staff in the room said Ohr was accompanied by a handful of attorneys, including a personal lawyer and counsel for the Justice Department.

At least seven GOP lawmakers — members of the House Judiciary and Oversight Committees — attended as well: Reps. Mark Meadows, Jim Jordan, Trey Gowdy, John Ratcliffe, Darrell Issa, Matt Gaetz and Andy Biggs. No Democratic lawmakers were on hand, but staffers of both parties attended.

Gaetz, emerging from the interview after nearly two hours, said Ohr appeared to be answering questions forthrightly but that his testimony about the timing of his contacts with Fusion appeared to conflict with answers given to lawmakers by Fusion GPS cofounder Glenn Simpson and former FBI attorney Lisa Page.

“Either Bruce Ohr's lying or Glenn Simpson's lying,” Gaetz said, describing “a number of factual conflicts” between their testimony. He added that they could conceivably have competing recollections but that it will be important to bring both before the Judiciary Committee in a public hearing to sort out the facts.



CONGRESS

Republicans find a new target in fight to discredit Russia probe

By KYLE CHENEY

Gaetz, Meadows and Issa told reporters that Ohr's testimony revealed that the FBI had more significant doubts about the credibility of the Steele dossier than the bureau revealed when it applied for a court-ordered surveillance warrant on a former Trump campaign adviser, Carter Page, in October 2016.

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“Not only did the FBI know that the dossier was unverified, but they also knew that there were real credibility issues where it would never end up in a courtroom,” Meadows said.

Meadows and Gaetz also emphasized that Ohr appeared to handle this matter differently than any other in his 27-year Justice Department career, describing a “unique set of circumstances” they said raised questions.

Meadows added that lawmakers also learned who Ohr provided the dossier to inside the FBI when he first provided a version of it in 2016. But he declined to name the official, saying that the specifics of the interview are meant to remain confidential.

Issa told reporters after Ohr had testified for nearly four hours that Ohr revealed he had multiple “handlers” at the FBI who received information he provided on Steele’s dossier, but Issa declined to name them.

“There’s quite a list of names,” he said.

Issa also said lawmakers had continuing questions about Ohr’s wife receiving “only \$44,000” for her work at Fusion GPS and that Ohr himself didn’t seem familiar with all of the details of her work.

Meadows and Gaetz also re-emerged to suggest that Ohr’s testimony supports their belief that the FBI “withheld material facts” from the court when it applied for the surveillance warrant on Page.

Ohr is expected to be in the closed-door interview most of the day. Attorneys for Simpson and Page were not immediately available for comment.

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